



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

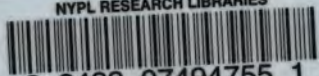
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

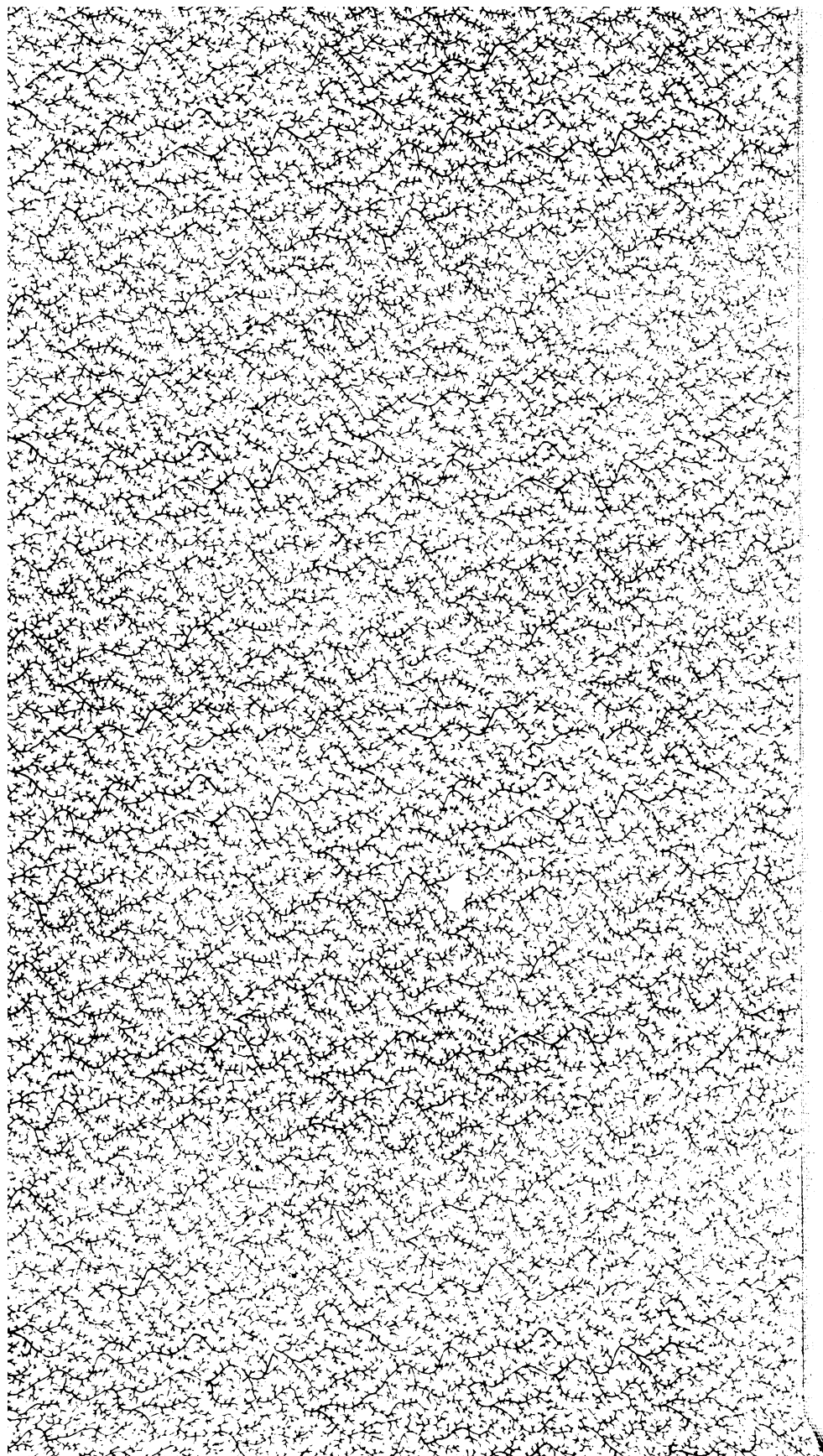
About Google Book Search

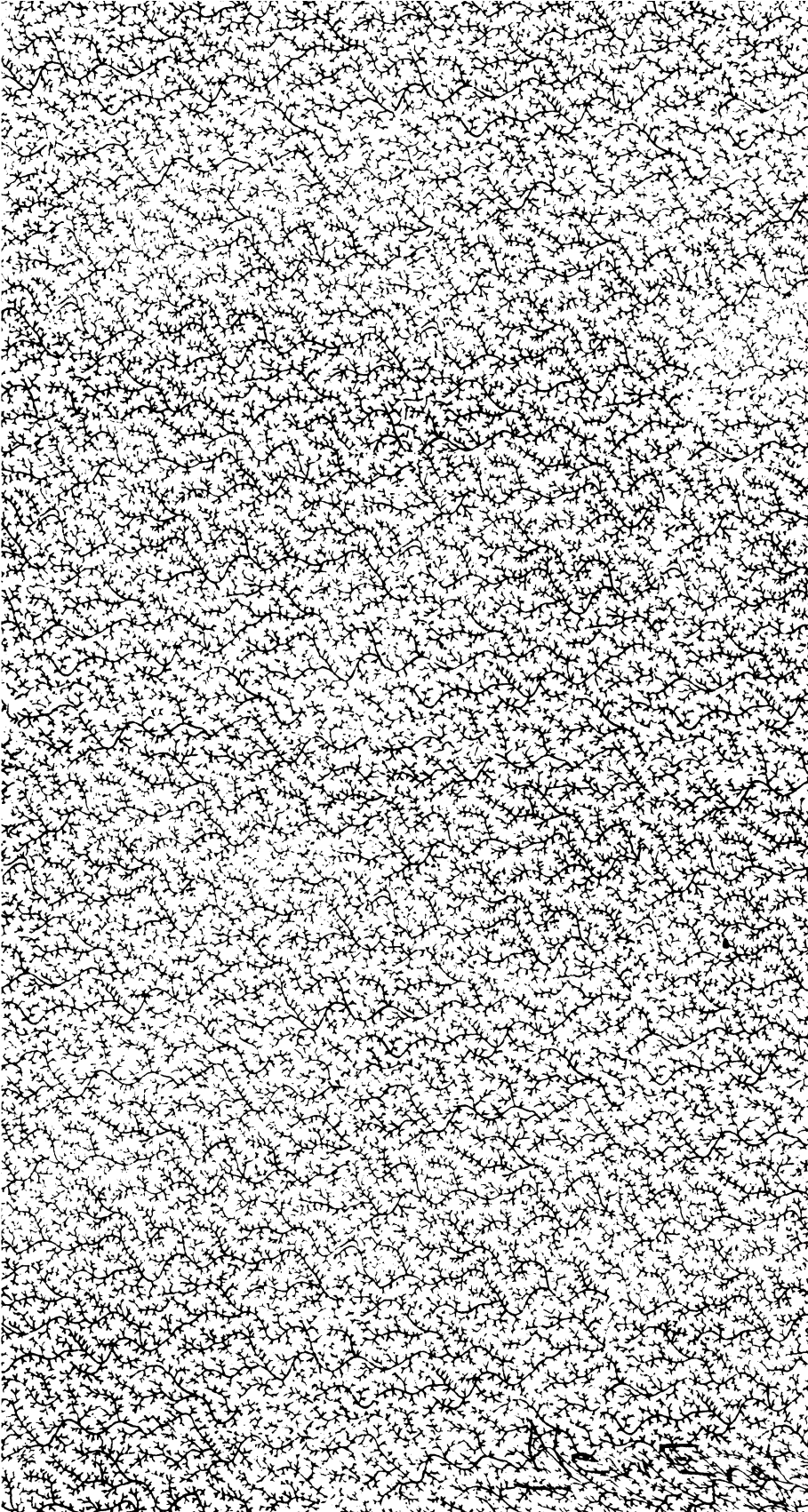
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07494755 1







John Ward Dean. Lib'n

TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION

OF THE

Birth of Shakespeare,

BY THE

New-England Historic-Genealogical Society,

M AT

BOSTON, MASS., APRIL 23, 1864.

REMARKS AND ODE BY JOHN H. SHEPPARD.

BOSTON:

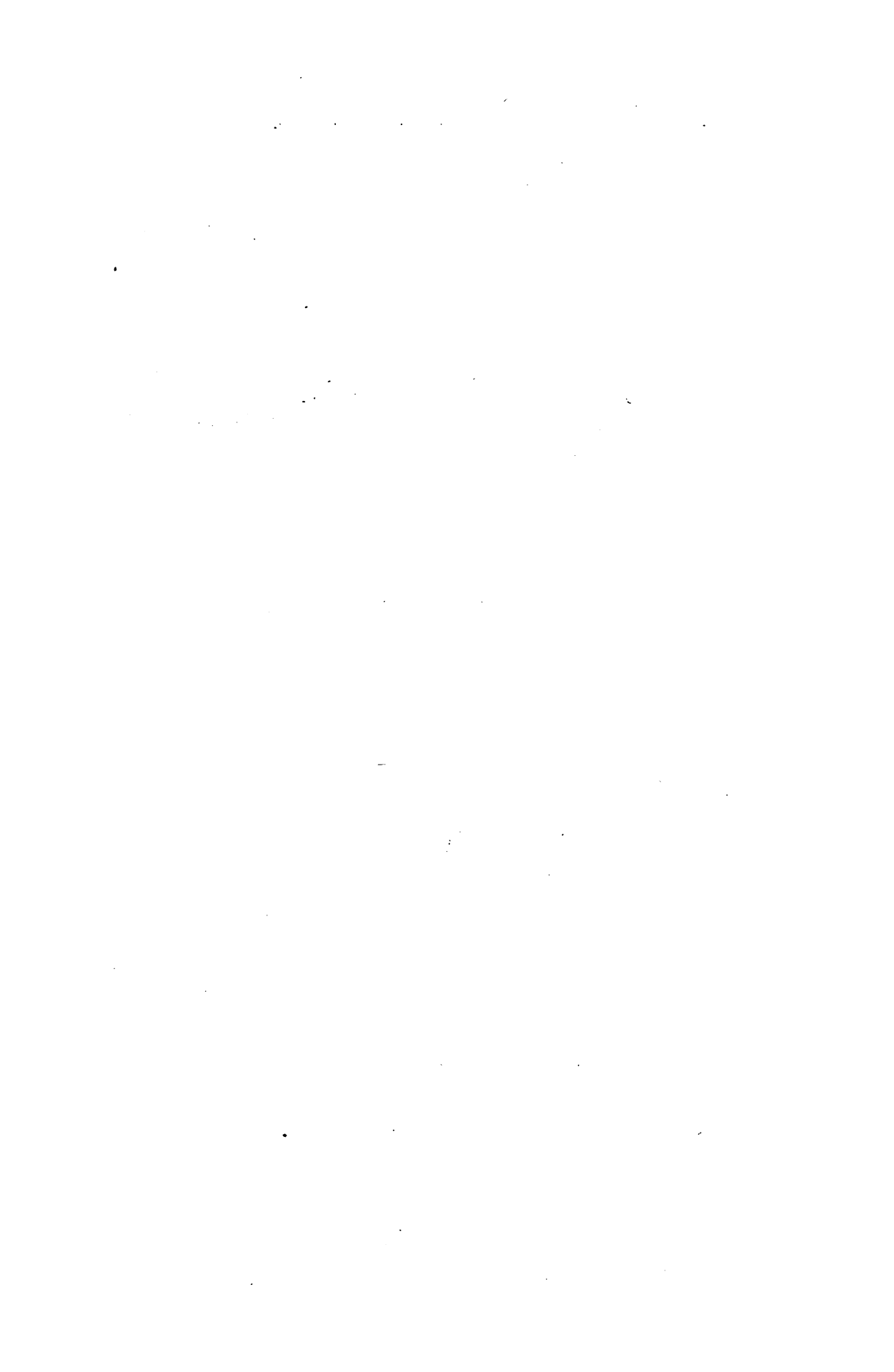
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY,
BY GEORGE C. RAND & AVERY, No. 3, CORNHILL.

MDCCLXIV.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
P 29626
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1899.

2211







TERCENTENARY CELEBRATION

OF THE

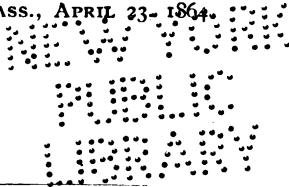
Birth of Shakspeare,

BY THE

New-England Historic-Genealogical Society,

AT

BOSTON, MASS., APRIL 23-1864.



REMARKS AND ODE BY JOHN H. SHEPPARD.

BOSTON:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY,

BY GEORGE C. RAND & AVERY, No. 3, CORNHILL.

MDCCLXIV.

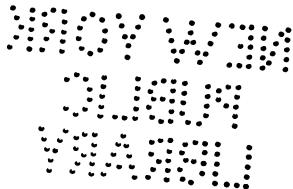
L.P.H.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

P 29626

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1899.

"Shakspeare should be regarded not merely as a wonderful genius, but as a providential man, who was sent to do a work for God and humanity in the new and marvellous age that we call modern. Luther opened the Bible; but Shakspeare unsealed human life, and brought the broad play and inmost mind of its scenes, events, characters, passions, and principles, into full light and air, and did not a little to interpret the Word and Spirit and Kingdom of God to the world."—*Speech of Rev. Samuel Osgood, D.D., at "The Century," New-York City.*



REMARKS.

REMARKS.

NOY WAD
JAN
WAD

R E M A R K S .

FISHER AMES, in an eloquent eulogy on the death of Washington, delivered before the Legislature of Massachusetts on the eighth day of February, 1800, speaking of the rarity of great men in history, remarks, "In all this dreary length of way, they appear like five or six light-houses on as many thousand miles of coast: they gleam upon the surrounding darkness with an inextinguishable splendor, like stars seen through a mist; but they are seen like stars, to cheer, to guide, and to save."

To men of this original character we owe the moral improvement and intellectual grandeur which have distinguished a few nations above all others. Some by their discoveries, others by their inventions, and here and there a transcendent genius whose writings have elevated and adorned our race, are among these benefactors of mankind; as though the Almighty had specially created a superior being, and given him an almost superhuman power to guide a nation to a higher and happier destiny. Such were Lord Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton; and we may add William Shakspeare, whose dramatic writings have done more to improve public taste and embellish the arts of life than any uninspired author, ancient or modern.

The home of childhood, where the eye of genius

first looks abroad upon the scenery of this beautiful world, sometimes gives a coloring to all the future life. It may have been so with Shakspeare; for Stratford upon Avon, where he was born, lies in the midst of a picturesque country, and perhaps contributed to those ideal landscapes which have charmed the world. We know but little of his early education; only that his advantages were not superior to those of thousands of other boys,—a few years at a free grammar-school in his native town. Ben Jonson, in a poem to the memory of his beloved William Shakspeare, says, “Thou hadst small Latin, and less Greek.” Of his acquirements, however, we may form some idea by a study of his writings. They afford indubitable evidence that he was a great reader, and had a most tenacious memory. The English authors of the time, translations of the Greek and Roman classics, works of history, voyages and travels, poetry, and indeed all sources of knowledge, even the dry technicalities of the law, must have come within his mental grasp. In this way he garnered up materials for the future ingenuity of his pen. That he had an exquisite ear for music, and a natural taste for painting and sculpture, no diligent reader of his plays can doubt; and in them we can trace some fruits of the seed sown in this grammar-school. But the training of his mind went far beyond any human tuition; as though there had been some invisible being watching over his progress, like the Genius Loci, according to ancient superstition; for he was an ardent lover of Nature. This round world, with its blue mountains in the distance, its green forests, vales, and glens, lake, river, and ocean, the starry heavens above, and the sun and moon in their glory, were

mirrored on his soul, as it were a photograph to look upon when he wrote. No poet that ever lived equalled him as a word-painter: his mind reflected the very features and drapery of Nature herself.

There was one intellectual attribute peculiar to him,—original, striking, and of surpassing force; the ideal conception so well described by Dugald Stewart in his “Philosophy of the Mind,”—a power not only of forming ideal creations, but of bringing persons and places of distant ages before the mind’s eye, as though they were present. Walter Scott, in his inimitable Waverley Novels, manifested, though in a less degree, this marvellous faculty. On this account, the learned Dr. Arnold, in his Lectures on History, has observed, that in the “Fortunes of Nigel” he presents the most life-like pictures of King James that have been drawn by any historian. The view of Rome in “Julius Cæsar,” and the isle of Prospero in the “Tempest,” might be offered in illustration, if time would allow.

He seems at a very early age to have acquired a knowledge of the world,—the precursor of his astonishing development of the affections and passions. Such knowledge is a fearful gift to the young; for the sight of the human heart in its worst estate is terrible. Take, for example, one of his deepest and sublimest tragedies,—as “Othello” or “Hamlet” or “Lear” or “Macbeth,”—and we shudder at the depravity there exhibited. This profound knowledge of man is one of the pillars on which his ideal conceptions securely rest; for he never violates good sense, nor introduces characters inconsistent with the object of his drama.

Shakspeare has been considered by a few persons

as a writer of lax morals, because sometimes a gross allusion or piece of vulgar wit from some clown or low fellow crops out in his plays; but most unjustly, and without cause. There may be solitary passages which offend prudish modesty: such excrescences belong rather to the age in which he lived than to the taste of the great dramatist. Dr. Chalmers, the late divine of Scotland, read all his plays at sixty-five, and remarked, "I look upon Shakspeare as an intellectual miracle;" and, at another time, "I dare say Shakspeare was the greatest man that ever lived; perhaps greater than Sir Isaac Newton himself." Let his tragedies and comedies be read, studied, and reviewed, act by act, scene by scene, as a scholar would read Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" or Spenser's "Faery Queen," and there would be no exception to the exalted opinion which Dr. Chalmers, Goethe, Hallam, and the late John Quincy Adams, entertained of this wonderful man.

In contemplating the intellectual character of Shakspeare, our thoughts are necessarily led to the stage, which inspired his dramatic efforts; and here may arise a question of ethics, touching the *morale* of the theatre, — a subject on which many good and excellent men of taste and learning differ in opinion. But neither the time nor the occasion requires a discussion of this kind. It is enough to observe, that, without the stage, the genius of Shakspeare might have slept forever, and Sophocles and Euripides and Terence, whose dramas have charmed the world for ages, been unknown. *To the pure, all things are pure*; and it is hard to believe that a virtuous mind was ever polluted by a well-written play enacted in a respectable theatre.

Pardon me for a personal and local allusion. It is to that joyous period of life when I first saw and felt the power of this great writer, as it were, in his glory. I was a boy at college. Three of us, classmates, one evening found ourselves at the old Federal-street Theatre, — the cynosure of Boston long before she became a city, and her beautiful Franklin Place a crescent of palatial stores. Cooper that night took the part of Hamlet; and, I think, Mrs. Powell of Ophelia. We entered a world of dazzling beauty. There was a dense audience: the pit, where we three boys sat midway, fronting the stage, seemed all heads and eyes; and the circle of boxes, row above row, was crowned with handsome men and women, the *élite* of the town, in elegant costume. In a flood of light, the orchestra struck up some rich old airs; and then, on a scene of profound stillness, the curtain rose. The recess of the stage looked dim and misty, representing a midnight hour; and as we listened to the low, troubled voices of the sentinels, the clock struck twelve. Then came on a gallant form in armor, in which “the majesty of buried Denmark did sometime dwell.” It was the ghost of Hamlet. To be sure, we boys were not frightened like Partridge in Tom Jones, though our faces were solemn. In the next scene, Mr. Cooper made his appearance amidst a drowning applause. But I will not dwell upon a play so well known to the public. There may be some present who have seen him in Hamlet; and perhaps, in this brief reminiscence of by-gone times, the chords of memory may be touched.

Mr. Cooper, the great American actor, had a remarkably elegant and graceful form: the expression of his face was manly and commanding; and, in the

deep mourning of the Prince, his bearing was dignified, and his gestures appropriate. Never shall I forget the clear, rich, deep tones of his fine dramatic voice. There was no rant, nor bellowing surges of passion, out-Heroding Herod, so popular among some amateurs of the theatre in the present day; for this eminent tragedian was always natural. Mrs. Powell was then a brilliant star of the stage, — a lady much respected for her talents, and beloved for her private virtues. Her voice was sweet and musical in its intonations, with a touch of sadness in its cadence, like the air of “Annie Lawrie,” said to be heard by the Scotch woman at the siege of Lucknow. Bernard was then the best comedian of the day. But they have all gone; and the Federal-street Theatre has disappeared with them.

The performance of “Hamlet,” as I then saw it, left no injurious traces to call forth the repentance of after-years. It rather filled the soul with sublime emotions, and awoke a noble ambition to do something.

“Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.”

The taste of the higher circles has changed. Private *tableaux vivants*, public readings and lectures, have become fashionable; and more especially the readings on Shakspeare from the classic and magnificent voice of Fanny Kemble, who will long be remembered. For in no seminary of education, nor school of rhetoric, have the vocal powers been cultivated to that degree of excellence which distinguishes the histrionic art. Indeed, we live in a world where good and evil are found together in almost every state of society; and it is the highest point of wisdom to choose the good,

and reject the evil. We carry our vices with us to the theatre: seldom do we acquire them there.

When Shakspeare, a few years before his death, retired from the gayeties of London, he returned to his native place, and there, with an ample fortune, lived in elegance. He had seen enough of the world, and cared but little for its honors or its applause. He took no pains even to collect his thirty-five plays (for "Titus Andronicus" is thought to be spurious), and to revise them, but left them to erudite critics to discuss, and curious antiquaries to resolve, age after age, to this day. He died in the meridian of his talents; some say, on the anniversary of his birth, 1616, at fifty-two years of age. Fortunately a portrait of him, taken from his bust, has come down to us: it is a noble and magnificent face. Of his figure, Aubrey says, "He was a handsome, well-shaped man." A more perfect model of a gentleman was never drawn than in the advice of Polonius to Laertes, wherein he says, —

" Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar."

There is reason to believe that Shakspeare was at heart of a religious turn of mind. There are many passages in his plays which evince his faith in a special Providence, and there are often solemn allusions to the spirit-world; in the sweet words of Longfellow, —

" To the islands of the blest,
To the land of the hereafter."

And who but a believer in Christianity could have written as he did of Christmas? — a holy day, which every year in this country seems more and more recovering from past neglect: —

“ Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes
 In which our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
 The bird of dawning singeth all night long.”

It is pleasing to meditate on places where extraordinary genius or illustrious merit has made a home. Imagination lingers in the Vale of Vaucluse, where Petrarch revived letters; or in Abbotsford, dear to all the lovers of romance and minstrelsy; and in Stratford upon Avon, where Shakspeare was born and died. And who is there in our own beloved land whose heart does not cling to those sacred precincts where lived the Father of his Country,—Mount Vernon; scarcely redeemed from all vulgar uses by the eloquent Everett, and set apart as a hallowed spot, before it was surrounded by the flames of civil war? May it be preserved by a kind Providence from desecration until we are again restored to union and peace!

The influence of Shakspeare's plays in England and the United States has exceeded that of all other writings except the Holy Scriptures. They are found in almost every dwelling of taste, and their beauties are familiar to every educated mind. Perhaps they are more generally read in the United States than in Great Britain, in consequence of our more numerous schools and seminaries. As in his time our ancestors generally belonged to England, we rightfully and cordially claim Shakspeare as also our own sweet poet; and happy is the thought, that, on this anniversary of his birth, the banner of St. George and the stars and stripes of our Republic can wave in unison to the memory of the same great man!

O D E.



ODE ON SHAKSPEARE'S BIRTHDAY.

BY JOHN H. SHEPPARD, ESQ.

IN Stratford upon Avon,
 Where the silent waters flow,
 The immortal Drama woke from sleep
 Three hundred years ago :
 Then, as the long, dark ages rolled away,
 A light from heaven shone on SHAKSPEARE'S face.
 Land of the illustrious dead ! with thee this day
 We love to linger near that hallowed place ;
 For wert thou not the father-land of our New-England race ?

Beyond the Rocky Mountains,
 From the Golden Gate of fame,
 Far east to Schoodic's misty shores,
 Is heard his honored name.
 Live where we may, such life-like scenes he drew,
 Arrayed in robes of beauty all his own,
 Nature herself proclaims each picture true
 To Albion's echoing hills : nor there alone ;
 As e'en Niagara speaks in Prospero's thunder-tone.

Ah ! what a halcyon memory
 Our school-boy days bring on,
 When young Othello told us how
 He Desdemona won !
 Where are the voices that once filled the air ?
 Let not stern manhood deem the illusion wrong,
 When the boy dreamed the enchanted isle was there
 Near Academic grove, unknown to song,
 Where Kennebec among the hills meandering glides along.

Not in the theatre alone
 Is seen his wondrous power ;
 Though some great actor tread the stage,
 The pageant of an hour :
 He visits many a humble home ; and, when
 Some brave thought stirs the heart by sorrow riven,
 We feel like heroes, though we live like men
 In lowly lot ; for here full oft at even
 The Bard of Avon sweeps the Æolian harp of heaven.

England, with all thy glory
 From the Druid days of old,
 Not Crecy's pride, nor Agincourt,
 Nor Field of the Cloth of Gold,
 Shines with such virtue in all coming time
 As genius, learning, minstrelsy, inspire :
 They fill the ideal world with thoughts sublime ;
 Guiding Ambition's eye to aim far higher
 Than light the flames of civil war with strange, unholy fire !

They gleam like stars in history
 Along a dreary waste
 Who first enlarged the bounds of mind,
 Or raised the tone of taste.
 Thus Bacon looms up in that glorious age
 Of Spenser's lay and Jonson's critic eye ;
 When a Promethean spark illumed the stage,
 And SHAKSPEARE drew such scenes of time gone by,
 That life a drama seems 'midst shadows of eternity.



